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ABSTRACT

The study on which this book is based examined the development of social relationships among black and white students in a new, desegregated urban middle school. In the initial phase, information was gathered from classroom observation, interviews, and a wide variety of supplementary sources over a three-year period beginning with summer preservice teacher training sessions held before the school opened in 1975. An abbreviated follow-up study was conducted in 1989. The following findings are reported: (1) the Board of Education, teachers, and parents generally supported interracial schooling; (2) a teacher ideology that included an academic orientation, a belief in the natural improvement of race relations, a colorblind perspective, and intense concentration on their own classrooms shaped the evolution of student peer relations; (3) the difference in the average achievement level of the black and white students resulted in teaching methods that resegregated classrooms; (4) differences in girls' and boys' social interaction lead to greater interracial mixing among boys than girls but both boys and girls tended to socialize in racially homogenous groups; (5) interracial romantic and sexual interest led to some reduction of segregation by gender as students moved from sixth through eighth grade, but had little effect on racial segregation and created friction between black and white girls; (6) the black and white students became somewhat more friendly and willing to work with each other as they progressed through school; and (7) some of the special features initially adopted to promote positive intergroup relations have disappeared over time. Statistical data are included on three tables. A list of 121 references and an index are appended. (FMW)

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